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Ten Years of Hospital Insurance

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S hospital insurance service has just completed its first decade of operation. It has had its ups and downs in those 10 years, but even in the most difficult periods the system has been acknowledged as fundamentally sound. There have been some major changes in the financial structure of the scheme, but only in the methods of supplying revenue; basically the protection afforded has remained unchanged.

When the then minister of health and welfare, Mr. G. S. Pearson, introduced hospital insurance 10 years ago British Columbia was Canada's guinea pig province in this adventure into welfare stateism. Setting up the system was a tremendous undertaking, and imperfections were not long in appearing. Chief among them was the premium plan, which looked all right in theory but was a failure in practice. Premier Bennett's government made the controversial switch to the "painless' method of financing the service by way of sales tax, which none of the defaulters under the abolished premium system could escape.

Today complaints against the method of raising money for the BCHIS are rare. No one enjoys paying sales tax, but dissatisfaction is tempered by the knowledge that through this levy everyone is protected against the now crippling cost of hospitalization. Even among those who protest against the size of the tax, how many would prefer personal responsibility for hospital bills which nowadays can run to thousands of dollars? How many hospitals could carry on without BCHIS? Certain it is that if the hospitals had to do their own collecting and incur bad debts as in pre-BCHIS days, per diem rates would have to be set so high that people of ordinary means simply could not afford to pay them.

To the hospitals BCHIS spells some curtailment of autonomy in administration, compensated by financial security. To the public it means a substantial addition to prices paid for a wide range of taxable goods, but freedom from the gnawing fear of hospital bills which used to be felt by heads of families. In both cases the compensations far outweigh the disadvantages.

Showing Their Hostility

DEPUTY PREMIER MIKOYAN did not miss the chance handed him on a platter last week by egg-throwing Hungarian and other iron country refugees in San Francisco. Soviet officials are quick to make political capital at the West's expense. The incident enabled him to say: "We stand for freedom. But we stand not for freedom for hoodlums, but for freedom from hoodlums." It was a telling point, even if Russia does not stand for freedom, period.

The hostile reception accorded Mr. Mikoyan by former Central Europeans wherever he goes during his visit to the United States is perhaps understandable. It should not take the form it does, however. The jeering and throwing of eggs and rocks suggest that European refugees have a lot to learn about behavior in democratic countries, where an official guest is a guest no matter where he comes from. Their displeasure may be natural enough recalling recent Soviet repressions in their native lands, but they are letting down the country that has given them shelter.

These unfriendly incidents are an embarrassment for President Eisenhower and his government, who are impelled to the normal courtesies due to a high-ranking visitor and whose efforts towards improving East-West relations are not helped by demonstrations of open hatred. They distort the picture, also, of customary U.S. hospitality to its visitors.

Yet if Mr. Mikoyan is as astute as he is said to be he should be able to evaluate the situation correctly He must know perfectly well that the the demonstrators are not hoodlums in the ordinary sense of this word, nor is their hostility a normal part of American life. He is bound to recognize them as persons provoked by memories of brutal Soviet treatment. These refugees will have to change their ways if they hope to fit into American life. Nevertheless Mr. Mikoyan can be under no delusion as to why they resent his presence. But the incidents have given him a propaganda weapon to wield as he sees fit.

Man Explores His World

IN DISTANT times scientists, philosophers and others may pore over the record of the Third Geophysical Year with growing realization that it was an ambitious attempt—back in the Twentieth Century. The inquiry ranged from the sun to the poles of the earth; from the mountain tops to the depths of the sea. Sixty-six nations co-operated in its major efforts—a universal watch on the sun and interstellar space at synchronized periods. The year—18 months in fact—came to its close with 1958. Some of the results are emerging, but many cannot be known for upwards of two years yet.

A few, scattered bits of knowledge have floated to the top already; evoking just as many questions as they may supply answers of a kind, each in its own way. Electrically-charged particles are much denser in the earth's atmosphere than had before been realized. The earth's magnetic field plays a part in trapping them. Far out in remoter regions of the atmosphere we do not know precisely what goes on. It is suggested that one day space travel might settle that. In the oceans of the world three large, long sub-surface currents of cold water have been traced moving in opposition to the warm currents on the surface, related to them and to meteorological factors. Two are in the Pacific and one below the Gulf Stream.

Magnetic storms on the face of the sun, the conformation of land masses in Antarctica, the depth of the earth's slender outer crust—there has been no limit to the questions asked of the research teams in the Geophysical Year. The factual answers, where there may be any, will come slowly. A monumental mass of recorded data must now be winnowed like grain to extract the kernels. The chaff may pile mountain-high; but the kernels will be worth that, because each small bit will be an addition to the present sum of human knowledge. Inevitably, as it was foreseen, mankind will be left with more and harder questions; but he will have tried in a co-operative way to piece together a little more of the puzzle which the universe presents to his limited vision.

Interpreting the News

Fifth Republic Begins

By JOSEPH MacSWEEN
Canadian Press Staff Writer

PREMIER Charles de Gaulle now begins the second stage of his adventure in grandeur for France — the hardest stage.

De Gaulle wielded dictatorial powers as he presided over the bloodless revolution that demolished the Fourth Republic and laid the foundation of the Fifth, in which he hopes France will build to new greatness.

The strength of the new structure will be tested now that de Gaulle, 68, has stepped up to the presidency; making his long-time ally, Michel Debre, 46, premier.

It is true that de Gaulle still holds over-riding power under the new constitution and it seems certain that this power won't be begrudged by Debre, who is chief author of the constitution.

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In fact, it is reported that Debre's first draft of the constitution would have given the president even more power, but de Gaulle himself revised the document. A president couldn't ask for a more co-operative premier.

Nevertheless one-man rule has ended and the Socialists have broken the national front that brought de Gaulle to power by refusing to accept representation in the new cabinet.

Perhaps this is fortunate as it gives anti-Gaullist elements an opposition leadership—apart from the Communists — around which to rally. Optimists hope it will be the beginning of a two-party system roughly along the lines of Conservative and Labor in Britain.

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The extent of the de Gaulle revolution — although quiet — can hardly be exaggerated. Besides giving France a new constitution, he has reformed the government, the economy, the currency, the defence organization, the judiciary and the educational system.

"Don't go getting any ideas, son"

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

AN MP from Quebec says he will introduce a resolution at the next session of parliament calling for a national lottery. Since he sits on the government side he may not get very far.

He is apt to be headed off by the party bigwigs.

There are some things the Ottawa government, any Ottawa government, is reluctant to have anything to do with. A national flag is one, a national sweepstake is another.

Funny thing this, too, in a way. Every government is forever on the lookout for new sources of revenue — they never have enough — and a government lottery would be a windfall. In B.C. for instance it could create many badly-needed hospital beds. But for some reason lotteries are deemed to be unclean, even though official eyes are kept shut to prize draws of one kind or another all over the place.

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It is this inconsistency, some people would say hypocrisy, that is difficult to reconcile.

Surely the thesis that a sweepstake is immoral is long outmoded. It can't be claimed, for instance, that Canadians have a higher ethical standard than, say, Britons or Irishmen, for that would be hard to prove.

Especially when governments in Canada have no scruples about taking a rake-off from horse-race betting, or from liquor vending.

Most people could settle the moral argument for themselves. It is a safe assumption the average buyer of sweepstake tickets doesn't think he is doing ill, or feel in any degree that his character is thereby downgraded.

Nor is it. This writer for one, I'm sure, wouldn't be any kinder, any more full of virtue, if he stopped buying sweepstake tickets tomorrow. Nor would his friends who similarly indulge, and who are as desirable a group of people as he could meet anywhere.

Actually, you know, intolerance, bigotry, bad temper, cruelty — of which there are plenty to be found in the human race — are much greater demerits than taking a chance in a lottery.

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Incidentally, I suppose the possibility is that the very cabinets which frown on lotteries have their pockets filled with sweepstake tickets. Some of them even make side bets on election results, I daresay.

It would be interesting anyway to know which cabinet ministers carry their austerity to the point of personal prohibition when it comes to lottery buying.

It is argued sometimes that if a person falls heir to money he hasn't worked for by the sweat of his brow it won't bring him satisfaction. What a notion! In this respect a sweepstake win is no different from a rich uncle's will in one's favor. And I never heard anyone cavil at the latter kind of unearned increment.

Ah well, I wish the Quebec MP luck anyway, if only because it might clear the clotted air that surrounds the subject of lotteries.

This writer doesn't care a great deal one way or another, as a matter of fact. He doesn't expect to have a fortune dropped unexpectedly in his lap. Anyway, he can always go to the next bingo game.

Gerald Waring

Reports from Ottawa

THE Americans are going to continue limiting their purchases of our oil and base metals, to protect their own producers.

We're going to go on limiting our purchases of American farm products like turkeys and frozen peas to protect Canadian producers.

The Americans are going to continue selling surplus wheat abroad at bargain prices, while endeavoring not to hurt Canadian sales.

We're going to apply our new anti-dumping laws to American goods where the circumstances warrant, while assuring the U.S. that these duties aren't discriminatory against American goods; that they apply to all countries even though in fact the U.S. may be the only country seriously affected.

These are the main areas of "agreement" in last week's conference of Canadian and American cabinet ministers on vexatious questions of trade and economic policy. Nobody really gave way anywhere. Yet Finance Minister Fleming says the meetings had "gone happily" and had been "extremely useful."

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Who's kidding whom? How can success be attributed to a meeting in in which neither side undertook to correct actions about which the other side complained?

Well, it depends upon the premise on which you start such a meeting. If you anticipate that your case is so strong that the other side cannot avoid seeing the error of its ways and agreeing to correct its error, then the denouement of this conference would be bitterly disappointing.

None of the participants went into the conference with this belief. All knew very well that Canada and the U.S. do not take economic action to hurt each other, but rather to protect their own legitimate interests. Any injury is incidental. It is due to the fact that the economic interests of Canada and the U.S. often conflict. We both want to sell our products in foreign markets while at the same time protecting our own producers from undue competition from foreign goods.

Neither government can easily accept economic injury or disadvantage to any substantial section of its people as the price of avoiding economic hurt to a foreign country. The persons who make up governments and legislatures are elected to look after the interests of those who elected them—even, if necessary, at the expense of the interests of the people of a neighboring friendly country.

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Set in this context, the conference was not a failure.

As Fleming put it, "Both sides understand the present status of the problems more clearly than before." The problems remain, but there is greater understanding in both governments about changes — perhaps subtle, perhaps substantial — which our current economic differences are undergoing. And there is greater understanding of and sympathy for the position and feelings of the party injured by the legitimate economic policies of the other.

This understanding and this sympathy cannot help but be beneficial over the long term. It works consciously and unconsciously in the minds of the men who make the policies. It impels them to seek the same protective results so far as their interests are concerned by other means less offensive to the injured neighbor. And it constrains them to look around next time—like the motorist who, having once hit a pedestrian, keeps a sharper watch in future for persons on foot.

The Packsack

On Being Superior

By GREGORY CLARK

WHEN you make a lot of money and move into a fashionable big house, it is pretty hard to withstand the impulse to differentiate yourself from others in many more ways than mere wealth. Few men and fewer women are content to be superior to their fellow men in wealth alone. They feel their wealth is an indication of their superiority in all respects, even though they made their money out of painkiller or pork packing, together with a certain nimbleness of wits and sundry lucky breaks.

Thus we see the familiar disaster of wealthy men and women affecting an accent that they conceive to be cultivated; both men and women assuming a new interest in works of art, in furniture, design textiles. Who of us has not, in shopping for some curtain material, seen some lady of obvious wealth grandly expressing her thoughts upon the quality of "drapes," as she calls them, and woefully coming to the loud conclusion that she will simply have to have her drapes hand-loomed for her? How often, on getting close enough to a rich man to hear his voice, is it not pontificating on subjects far removed from painkiller or pork, such as symphony or non-objective painting?

But the worst jam you can get into is being invited to a rich man's home for dinner and they serve artichokes. I always thought artichokes were little insipid things like nude and nobbly potatoes. That is the Jerusalem artichoke. But there is another artichoke that I solemnly believe was invented solely for the use of rich people in confusing their poor relations. It is a sort of small pineapple thing, with spiney leaves sticking out of it like the quills of a boiled porcupine. You eat the leaves. You pull off each stubby, stiff leaf, dip it in melted butter and bite off the tender end. It is usually served by itself. You sit there with this strange object on your plate, wondering which fork to use.

One of the first things rich people learn is how to eat artichokes. Then they invite the lowly to dinner, and sit back, nobody moving, while all watch the victim.

The artichoke is one of the instruments of the mystique of wealth by which the wealthy are enabled to feel their superiority. It is even better than learning how to pronounce the word Chartreuse.

Washington Angle

Say When Mr. Mikoyan

By DAVID LAWRENCE

AS the deputy premier of the Soviet government, Anastas Mikoyan was entitled to a courteous reception by the officials of the United States government. The American people, however, are under no obligation to embrace a man whose hands are dripping with the blood not only of his fellow-countrymen but of the people of Hungary and the other captive nations in Eastern Europe.

Indeed, this is the opportunity of a lifetime to do something for the millions of persons imprisoned even now in slave-labor camps in Russia and for the millions who are denied freedom behind the Iron Curtain. For, as Mr. Mikoyan travels around America, questions can be asked him publicly concerning the conditions inside the Soviet Union for which he, as a part of the Kremlin apparatus, is responsible.

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When, for instance, will censorship be removed so that the Iron Curtain can be lifted for the more than 300,000,000 people who today are being forbidden to learn the truth of what's going on in the world around them or outside their countries?

When will the millions of innocent men and women under Kremlin control who have been thrust into jail, without a hearing or a trial, be given a chance to regain their liberty?

When will the elderly persons in the Soviet Union who have children in the United States and other countries be permitted to leave their native land so they may visit their families abroad?

When will the people of the Soviet Union be given a chance to vote in a free election — an election in which more than the government's own party is allowed to put up candidates?

When will the right of self-government be given once more to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany?

When will freedom of expression be permitted for the writers of the Soviet Union, and when will an author like Boris Pasternak be allowed to accept an award given him by a non-political organization abroad such as the Nobel Prize for literature?

When will the Kremlin withdraw its troops from the smaller countries contiguous to it and let their peoples enjoy complete sovereignty?

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Above all, when will the Soviet government begin to honor its pledges and its promises as written in treaties, agreements and documents of an international nature in the 13 years since the close of the Second World War?

For there can be no assurance of peace if one of the powerful governments, with a vast military machine at its disposal, can at any time violate its written word and plunge the world into war.

There can be no trust, moreover, as long as the basic principles of freedom and a free society are ignored by the tyrants and autocrats in the Kremlin.

Anastas Mikoyan is a symbol of dictatorship. Last week Americans generally — especially those on the "liberal" side—were enthusiastically acclaiming Fidel Castro and expressing satisfaction that Batista, the dictator, has been overthrown in Cuba. Americans ought not to adopt one rule for dictators in this hemisphere and another for the dictators in Europe. Only a few days ago, Dr. Milton Eisenhower, the president's brother, said in a report to the White House on Latin American affairs:

"I believe the suggestion of Vice-President Nixon is sound and would be applauded by Latin America itself —that we have an 'abrazo' (embrace) for democratic leaders, and a formal handshake for dictators."

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This expresses accurately the manner in which the United States should react to the visit of Anastas Mikoyan. He is not deserving of the social embraces which some short-sighted Americans are giving him. He could mistake this for approval of Communist methods and customs. In fact, the main reason why the deputy premier has come here, and the main reason why Premier Khrushchev sent him to urge a "summit" conference, is that this is one way to set in motion a dramatic distortion of America's position. It is a way of gaining prestige at home for the dictatorship.

More than anything else in the world, American approval of Communist behavior is important to the Kremlin in squelching any possible uprisings inside the Soviet Union. To welcome Mr. Mikoyan in America with open arms, and without voicing any protest, is to furnish headlines in the Soviet-controlled press telling the Soviet people that the people of this country no longer disapprove of or at least are unwilling to combat the Communist philosophy.